

# HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

A meat knife was used to cut a lemon that was subsequently cooked with fish in a dairy pot. The knife had not been used with hot meat for the past twenty four hours. What is the *kashrus* status of the fish and the pot?

The issues:

- A) *Basar Bechalav*, a quick recap of last week's discussion
- B) *Nosain Ta'am bar Nosain Ta'am*, second-hand flavor
- C) *Nosain Ta'am Lifgam*, imparting a negative flavor
- D) *Davar Charif*, a sharp food
- E) *Sakana*, items that pose danger; meat and fish together

## A) *Basar Bechalav*

The Torah records the *mitzvah* forbidding meat and milk -- cooking a kid goat in its mother's milk. Both of these foods are permissible by themselves. When mixed together they get transformed into a new forbidden item. *Basar bechalav* does not become Scripturally forbidden food unless it is cooked together. Rabbinically, one may not even eat them at the same meal. We wait after eating meat before eating cheese. When eating the milk first, one must cleanse his mouth (and hands) before eating meat. Foods that contain meat or milk ingredients are generally treated like the actual food.

The *ta'am*, flavor of the two mixing in a proportion of one to fifty-nine or less causes the prohibition. At a more disparate proportion, the smaller part of flavor is *bateil*, neutralized. Isolated flavor is also forbidden. Thus, if the flavor was *balu'a*, absorbed into a utensil, then imparted into the other food, it is also forbidden. A pot used for milk may not be used for meat and vice versa.

Neutral food that has meat or milk *ta'am* in it may not be cooked together with the other type. If they are cooked together, the *ta'am rishon* forbids the mixture. If the *balu'a* flavor from a pot was cooked into a neutral food, this secondary flavor is diluted, but could pose problems, as will be discussed. Flavor can not be imparted cold. Therefore, if a clean dairy knife is used to cut potatoes they may be cooked with meat. It should be noted that some poskim suggest stringency when the knife is not kosher at all. Cleaning does not always remove everything. Meat and milk do not have this stringency, but one must wash the item after it was cut or placed in the utensil of the opposite type. [See Chulin 103b- 107b-114b, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. YD 87:1 etc. 91:1-2 (-97), commentaries.]

## B) *Nosain Ta'am bar Nosain Ta'am*

As mentioned, while kosher food cooked in a non-kosher pot is forbidden, neutral food cooked in a meat or dairy pot does not necessarily attain the status of the meat or milk. Some details of eating them separately change in this case. As mentioned, unlike other forbidden foods, meat and milk are both permitted. They are only forbidden when

mixed. Forbidden food's *ta'am balu'a* is strong enough to forbid other kosher food. The newly forbidden food, that has no non-kosher ingredients, but its flavor, is now like a piece of forbidden food. The poskim debate whether it can forbid other kosher food in its own right, and if so, in what proportions. However, meat flavor has not yet become forbidden. It must still be transferred to the milk. If it is transferred from the pot directly to the milk it is considered potent enough to make a new forbidden mixture. If it is first transferred to a neutral food, from which it must be transferred a second time to the milk, it loses its potency. It will no longer be able to form the full force forbidden mixture.

This is known as *nosain ta'am bar nosain ta'am*, 'flavoring son of flavoring', better known by its acrostic: *nat bar nat*. According to some, food cooked in the pot of one type may be eaten together with actual other type food. A potato barbecued on a clean meat grill could be eaten with cheese. Others only allow this if the food absorbed the flavor through a watery medium. This view maintains that only if the *ta'am* was transferred another time may it be considered too weak. Noodles cooked in a dairy pot, may be eaten with meatballs. The *ta'am* was transferred to the water, then to the noodles, and still needs to be transferred to the meat. Yet another view permits it only if the neutral food was not cooked in the dedicated pot, but was placed in there when very hot. Cooking on the flame is strong enough to impart first hand flavor. In practice we follow one of the latter two opinions. However, even if cooked dry in a meat pot, it does not attain the full stringency of the meat. One need not wait the six hour period before eating cheese. [See Chulin 112b, etc., Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. YD 94 95:1-2, commentaries.]

### C) *Nosain Ta'am Lifgam*

If forbidden food becomes inedible it is no longer forbidden. It is no longer fit to benefit from. If such 'food' is mixed with kosher food in proportions that would normally forbid the mixture, it is permitted. It does not contribute a complimentary taste to the kosher food. To forbid the mixture there must be a positive benefit.

Accordingly, only if forbidden isolated flavor improves the taste of the mixture is it forbidden. If a utensil was cleaned and was not used again for twenty-four hours, it is no longer able to impart pleasant flavor. The *balu'a* in the walls is now *nosain ta'am lifgam*, gives an unpleasant flavor. In the case of meat or dairy pots, one may not use a utensil of the opposite type even after twenty-four hours. If it was used, the pot now becomes forbidden. It now has both tastes in it. The new taste is fresh and one should be able to consider it as though the pot has been changed to the opposite type. The old taste should not be forbidden. However, since one may not use it for the opposite type even when old, this pot is useless in its present state for either type. The food is permitted.

We mentioned that imparting flavor requires heat or soaking it for a long time. Therefore, one could theoretically use the same utensil cold for both dairy and meat. However, it is easy to forget to clean them in between, or not to clean them thoroughly. In addition, when washing them with hot water they might absorb mixed flavors. Therefore, we use separate utensils even for cold uses. This includes knives, that might also be used for hot food on occasion. Thus, if a knife was used to cut hot meat it became meaty. If it is then used for hot dairy food it forbids it. If it was used more than twenty-four hours later, it does not forbid the dairy food, but the knife must be *kashered*. It should also not be used for dairy, even cold, but if used, it does not forbid it. [See Avoda Zara

65a-69a, 76a Zevachim 97a, etc., Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. YD 93:1 94 122, commentaries.]

### (D) *Davar Charif, sharp foods*

Both preceding issues are affected by the sharpness of a neutral food. The Talmud considers sharpness similar to heat. Salting food is like roasting it and pickling it is like cooking it. This means that forbidden foods that are salted with kosher foods forbid the kosher foods. Not only is pickling considered like cooking, but a sharp food can impart flavor as though it is hot. This applies when the sharp food is cut with a knife. The combination of the pressure of the knife and the sharpness of the food are like heat. [A minority view recommends stringency without knife pressure.] Sharp foods have a second stringency: they are not neutralized easily. Regular flavor becomes insignificant in a proportion of less than one part to sixty. Sharp foods can be detected in much smaller proportions. The poskim debate whether this is a Scriptural rule, or whether Scripturally the flavor can not be more powerful than the actual food itself, which would inevitably lose its identity in sixty parts of other food. Rabbinically, the flavor is considered forbidden in its own right until it is no longer detectable.

Sharp foods do not usually have their own natural forbidden source. The only such instances could be vinegar from forbidden wine or fruits and vegetables that have become forbidden due to the laws applying to Eretz Yisroel. It could also apply to foods that attained forbidden status by being banned personally, or by being dedicated to *Avoda Zara*. Otherwise the sharpness becomes an issue in connection with flavors of other food, *ta'am* and *balu'a*. The classic case of a sharp food is radish. Vinegar and brine are also considered sharp or hot. Other foods are subject to debate, including lemon. Lemon juice was sold by gentiles. The concern was that the lemons had been cut with a gentile's knife, whether or not it was freshly used for non-kosher foods. The basis to permit it was that the first slice absorbs all the forbidden flavor. Later slices are kosher. They neutralize the flavor in the first slice. In our case, a lemon was sliced with a meaty knife, which is not non-kosher, but the lemon was placed in a dairy pot with (neutral) fish.

Two stringencies apply to sharp foods. They can extract flavor from a cold knife, such that it will be considered *ta'am rishon*, as though it came directly to the food from the original food that was *balu'a*. There is no leniency of *nat bar nat*. In addition, they can turn *ta'am pagum*, old flavor, into fresh flavor. Many poskim apply this to any sharp foods. In our case, the full *ta'am* of the meat is extracted from the knife by the sharpness of the lemon, regardless of when it was last used with meat. It is forbidden to cook these lemons with milk. According to some, this is Scriptural. If they were cooked together, one would need to evaluate the proportion of the milk against the blade of the knife, because the entire blade's *ta'am* is absorbed by the lemon.

In our case, the issue is whether the newly absorbed lemon flavor can forbid the dairy pot and the fish, by mixing with the *ta'am* in the walls of the pot. If the pot was freshly used for milk, the laws of *bitul* must be applied. [It is most likely that there is enough to neutralize the blade of the knife.] If the pot was not used for twenty-four hours, the poskim debate the matter. Many maintain that the cooking process blunts the sharpness, so that it can not refresh the old flavor. Then, the fish would not be forbidden. The pot could still require *kashering*, depending on *bitul*. [See Chulin 111b-112a, Avoda Zara 39a, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. YD 94:6 95:2 96:1-4, commentaries.]

**(E) Sakana, unsafe items; Fish and Meat**

The Talmud describes items that are considered unsafe for various reasons. The most obvious are questions of foods that might have poisons in them, such as foods eaten by poisonous animals. Contaminated foods that might cause other sicknesses are also included. The Talmud describes fish and meat as a food that can cause leprosy. While we may not be familiar with the disease or the cause, we could very well be ignorant of many maladies that the ancients knew about. Due to Hashem's kindness, these sicknesses have become less common. In addition, some unsafe practices become so prevalent that 'Hashem protects fools'. Furthermore, some say that the physical malady is also a symptom of a spiritual malady that goes with it. Thus even if the physical malady has no current manifestation, one may not endanger his spirituality.

*Mitzvos* associated with danger include the *mitzvah* to guard one's health, to prevent hazards in the home -- a positive and negative *mitzvah*, not to stand by while someone is in danger, the more so oneself, not to injure oneself and to love others like oneself, the more so oneself. All of these are Scriptural *mitzvos*. Most of all, the Torah is given to us to live by, and not to die by. This is the basis for danger to one's life overriding any other *mitzvah*. It certainly requires us to avoid danger when it does not conflict with a *mitzvah*.

Fish and meat may not be cooked together, with or without a liquid medium. Some permit them to be baked, separately but exposed, in the same oven. Others maintain that their fumes may not be mixed. If both were cooked together in a utensil, the flavor forbids the utensil and it requires *kashering*. The rules of *bitul* apply to small amounts of one cooked with the other.

The poskim debate whether to apply the stringencies of *balu'a* and *davar charif* to *sakanah*. The prevailing practice is to use a clean meat pot for fish. Some practice stringency ideally, but do not forbid it if it was done. The *balu'a* in the knife should not be more stringent than the direct flavor from a pot, certainly not if it came through a lemon, that is debatably not real *charif*. Therefore, the fish is permissible. [See Psachim 76b. Sh. Ar. YD 116:2-3, Taz 2, Pischei Teshuva 3 etc., Darkei Teshuva 27.]

**On the Parsha ...** *And there was placed before [Eliezer] to eat, but he said I shall not eat until I have said my words!" They placed poison. Eliezer caught on. [Targum Yonasan] He stalled saying "I need to say my Brochos!" in the hope that it would save him. Indeed Malach Gavriel switched the poison to Besuel's side. Besuel died that night. [Baal Haturim] ... [24:23 55]* Assuming that Eliezer knew that Gavriel would do this, how did he know that Besuel would not notice the plates moving around? It is forbidden to drink *giluy*, wine that was exposed. A snake might have drunk from it, leaving poison. This only applies to specific liquids. Eliezer noticed that they had not placed drink before him. That would come later. He knew that they would not worry about *giluy*, feeling the need to keep their eyes on the food. This would allow him to distract them, while still assuring that they would not hesitate to eat it later. Gavriel could do his part unobserved by Besuel.

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